

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL PAMPHLET.

1057] LONDON, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1817.

[1058

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

As Mr. COBBETT commences his present communication, by declaring that he is preparing to PUT INTO EXECUTION A MEASURE, which has long occupied his mind, as one of the most effectual means of rooting out ever those causes of evil to our country, from which causes, the individual he addresses (Mr. BENBOW, a State Prisoner) is now suffering; there can be no doubt that Doctor STODDART (commonly called SLOP) of the *Day and New Times*, and Taylor STEWART (alias SNIP), of the *Courier*, and the rest of that precious fraternity, will pronounce that all this means Murder. Among other precautions, therefore, they will probably recommend the dungeon of poor BENBOW to be additionally darkened and opened; and they may perhaps, insinuate, that there is no security for men like themselves, while any of these scrutinizing mechanics remain above-ground. No doubt, the labouring classes are better informed than they ought to be; (Lord Sidmouth has said so); they presume to penetrate beyond the surface things, and therefore, they ought to be driven beneath the surface of the earth! And where the hardship? Is not truth to be found at the bottom of a well? Let those, therefore, who see her and seek her, be shoved down after her, and be thankful.—To return, (I mean to the subject; and not that the Truth-seekers should return to day-light; Oh, no!) there is, I say, be no doubt, that Slop, Snip, and the rest, will assert that the measure alluded to in the following letter, is Murder: the assassination of all the leading, if not of all the untrapping Anti-reformers in the kingdom. Matters not that Mr. Cobbett does not expressly say so. His Readers are now so well-informed, that they not only know that he does not mean what he says, but they know that he does mean, let him say what he will. There is, it seems a private key to his writings, in which all his Readers are now furnished, though for some time, it was engrossed, by Slop, Snip, and the like. To all outward appearance, Mr. Cobbett recommended the people to assemble peaceably, for the purpose

of petitioning. This advice was not then rightly understood by the people, for they followed it literally. Whereas the true meaning, as shewn by Interpreter Cross at Derby, was, to assemble tumultuously for the purpose of rioting. Mr. Cobbett observed, that any man might draw a petition; meaning, according to the key, that any man might draw a poinard; and consequently to petition the House of Commons, means by interpretation, to assassinate the House of Commons. In his Letter to Lord Folkestone, printed about three weeks ago, he observed, that Lord Sidmouth's Circular would be remembered long after his head was as white as snow. To the uninitiated, this appears to imply a probability, that his Lordship will live till his hair is as white as time can make it. But ask the interpreters, and they will find the true reading to be, that Lord Sidmouth's Circular will not be forgotten even after his head has been cut off, and bleached in the Sun! A former Number contained a List of Names. A man must be an idiot (says Doctor Slop) not to comprehend the object of that list. It is a list of Proscription (says Taylor Snip). It is a number of persons marked out by the blood-thirsty miscreant to be assassinated (says Doctor Slop). Yes, that's what it is, says Taylor Snip. His pretended object is, to procure a Book to be written, in which the names of all those persons, among others, should be inserted, and their actions exhibited, so as to be long remembered, nay, never to be forgotten. Pshaw! says Doctor Slop. Pish! says Taylor Snip. Who does not see that written in a Book, means smitten on a Block; that exhibited means gibbeted; remembered, dismembered; and never to be forgotten, to hang till they are rotten? Moreover, says Doctor Slop (*Day and New Times*, Nov. 18, I think), is not the name of WILBERFORCE in that list; and has he not since addressed one of his Registers to Mr. Wilberforce? Does he not thereby whet the knives of his assassins, and point out Mr. Wilberforce as the man to begin with? A word in your ear, Doctor! Yes, in your ear; don't flinch: (it is not your turn yet, though you are in the List). Is not the name of Major

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quences, which will result from the present struggle. That the people will triumph in the end is certain, and then I shall wish to see BURKE alive that he might witness the helter-skelter of the despots all over the world. The pullings down of Napoleon were nothing. He was a despot humbling despots. It was genius against feebleness of mind. It was valour against cowardice, but there was no *principle* at work; there was none of that electric sentiment which flies from mind to mind. There was nothing in his victories which invited mankind to rally round his standard. The effect of his deeds was to astound and not to cheer and encourage. To set all Europe free, there requires only the regaining of their rights by the people of England. All the world have their eyes upon her. Every bosom in which freedom breathes, feels an interest in the termination of this struggle. The despotisms, even now, totter to their very base, and the bare restoration of the people of England to their rights, would crumble them to dust. This would be accomplished, too, without any other revolution in England than the mere restoration of the people to the enjoyment of what the law says they ought to enjoy. It is the Borough System and the Borough System alone, which has restored the Bourbons, the Pope, the Inquisition, and all the other causes of tyranny and persecution; and with that system, which is their sole prop, they will fall never to rise again. Though the thing is very singular in appearance, nothing is so natural, as that his Holiness the Pope, who condemns Protestants to the fires of Hell, should call the Prince Regent (that is to say, the mass of power of which he is the ostensible head) *his best friend*; nothing is so natural as that LOUIS,

the *beloved* by the French, should thank the Prince Regent for his Crown; nothing is so natural as that the monks of Spain should profess more confidence in the Prince Regent than in the Virgin Mary herself; nothing is so natural as to see the Pope's Legate bowing amongst the heretics of St. James's. But, if once the Chapel of St. Stephens were to contain a set of men really elected by the people of the kingdom, away would go Bourbons, Pope, Monks and Legates, as I now see the dead sticks and leaves flying before a stiff breeze from the North. The struggle in England, therefore, at this moment, is the struggle of oppressed Europe. There is the heaven, which will lighten the whole lump; or the whole lump will remain dead as a stone for ages to come.

I feel confident that the former will be the result, and in a Letter lately addressed to my Lord FOLKESTONE, I have endeavoured to prove, and I think I have proved, that such a result would be greatly to the advantage of the nobility of England. But, in saying this, I proceed upon the hope that a returning sense of justice towards the people, will very soon operate with that nobility; and, my Lord, as you once thought it not beneath you to yield yourself up to the councils of selfish, cunning, pension-hunting writers, permit me to hope that you will not think it presumption in me to suppose it possible that you may lend an ear to one who has shown, through the whole course of his life, that his ruling passion has been a desire to see his country happy and great.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

And most humble Servant

WM. COBBETT.

ERROR.—In No. 32, third line of the last column, for *story* read *song*.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

Printed and Published by WM. JACKSON, No. 11, Newcastle Street, Strand, and sold wholesale and retail, at 192, Strand, London.

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Cartwright in that same list, as well as yours, or that of Mr. Wilberforce? Mr. Cobbett, too, addressed one of his Registers to the Major some six weeks ago. If your mode of interpretation be correct, the Reformers are advised by Mr. Cobbett, to kill Major Cartwright as soon, or rather sooner than Mr. Wilberforce! But, Doctor, are you serious, when for the fifth time over, you call that a List of Proscription—a list of persons recommended by Mr. Cobbett to be assassinated, when that same list contains not only the names of several of Mr. Cobbett's fellow-labourers in the cause of Reform, but the name of Mr. Cobbett himself? Serious! to be sure you are. It is no laughing-matter. Besides, you never joke. You have always too much gall, and hardly enough wit, to make merry. You were serious when the other day you spoke of the Stock Exchange Hoax, and called it the infamous fraud of Lord Cochrane. This you did, contrary to truth, and to your own belief; but still you were serious, even to bitterness; and you expressed regret (and felt it too) that his Lordship was not made to undergo much greater sufferings on the occasion. Can you at any time be other than serious, while you are capable of wishing Lord Cochrane had been totally crushed for an offence, of which you have long ceased to believe that he was guilty; and equally capable of hanging Mr. Cobbett for a traitor, on suspicion of his having insinuated, that certain individuals are death-deserving tyrants? You will, I am persuaded, solemnly assert, for the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth time, that the afore-said List of Names is a List of Proscription, and nothing less. And, as to the author's inserting his own name, why, it only proves him to be the more deadly-intentioned, the more desperately bloody-minded. It proves, to be sure, that rather than you and the rest of you should not be hanged, he would himself be hanged, even in your company!

Well, now, as to the announcement of his project in the present Number. It must, as I said before, and as you will say after me, mean *Murder*. When he dissuaded the Lud-dites from breaking machinery, he meant Murder, did not he? You know that a dissuasion from one species of violence, always implies the recommendation of another species of violence. The present project, ostensibly, is, to communicate to all uneducated Reformers, a *knowledge of Grammar*. The people, you know, were accused of presenting petitions *not grammatically correct*. And those petitions were rejected, the

petitioners being "*ignorant*:" though some of them were afterwards *put into prison* for being "*better informed*." Mr. Cobbett affects, (you know it must be all sham) to mean little more than to deprive the Ministers of the first of these two strings to their bow—to deprive them of the plea of *ignorance* against the People. And then, to be sure, if they ply the other string, and gag the people for their *learning*, it will be the people's own fault. To get on. Speaking ungrammatically (as you, Doctor, used to do in the Vice-Admiralty Court at Malta) or writing ungrammatically (which you as well as I condescend to do now and then), is vulgarly called *murdering the King's English*. And the English subjects of his Majesty, may, without offence to your loyalty, be called *the English of the King*. It is therefore, to dissuade from one species of violence be to recommend another, it naturally follows, that to guard the Reformers against murdering the King's English, is the same thing as to incite them to kill all his Majesty's loyal subjects. This being the case, you have now a fine field for inveighing against the abominable bloody-mindedness, and horrible murderous and desolating designs of the Author. Now is your time for suppressing his Publication, and burying his Publisher alive. Avail yourself of this opportunity, and you and your fellows will not only enjoy all the liberty, but the *exclusive use* of the political Press. Squirt away, then, Doctor Slope Thorough-stitch, Taylor Snip!

W. J.

TO
MR. BENBOW,

OF THE TOWN OF MANCHESTER,

One of the English Reformers now imprisoned in some prison in Great Britain, under a warrant of a Secretary of State, in virtue of an Act, lately passed, lodging the absolute power of imprisonment in the hands of the Ministry.

North Hampstead, Long Island,
September 19, 1817.

DEAR SIR,—I am now preparing to put into execution a measure which has long occupied my mind

as one of the most effectual means of rooting out for ever those causes of evil to our country, from which causes you are now suffering; and, for many reasons, I have chosen to communicate this my intention to the public through the channel of a Letter addressed to you.

Your conduct, while in London last winter, was such as to entitle you to my regard and respect, and the mind and talents you discovered did not fail to excite my admiration. You were the man, and, I believe, the only man, who had the honesty and sincerity to tell Sir Francis Burdett, that the people were no longer to be made the dupes of personal ambition. Your stock of information as to the state of the country; your eloquent and forcible description of that state; your view of the causes of the evils; your moderate manner of seeking a remedy; your zeal, your industry, your disinterestedness; in short, every thing I saw in you tended to give me the highest opinion of your understanding and talents as well as of your public spirit and virtue. If the bars of your dungeon will afford you light sufficient to read, the sight of any public paper is, I see, denied you; and, therefore, you may, perhaps, close your eyes for ever without knowing of what I now address to you; but, at any rate, it will, if that event should happen before the day of justice comes, be a source of satisfaction

to me to know, that I have borne this public testimony, respecting your conduct and character.

However, let us hope, that we are to meet again under the protection of those laws, which our forefathers shed their blood to maintain. You are young enough to see all our present foes swept off by their own gluttony, drunkenness and debaucheries. At any rate, the present state of things *cannot last long*. Either a *Censorship direct* must be established, and the very form and name of *Juries* must be abolished; or, there must be that very sort of Reform, for which we have suffered, but for which we still contend, and of the obtaining of which I entertain not the smallest fear.

To be prepared for this happy change it is the duty of every man of talents amongst the Reformers to qualify himself, in one particular respect, of which I am now about to treat. No doubt remains in my mind, that there was more talent discovered, and more political knowledge, by the leaders amongst the Reformers, than have ever been shown, at any period of time, by the Members of the two houses of parliament. Indeed, the *envy* of these latter on this score was so manifest, that they could not help every moment letting it peep out through their awkward affectation of contempt.

There was one thing only in which any of you were deficient,

and that was in the mere art of so arranging the words in your Resolutions and Petitions as to make these compositions what is called *grammatically correct*. Hence men of a hundredth part of the *mind* of some of the authors of the Petitions were enabled to cavil at them on this account, and to infer from this incorrectness of arrangement, that the Petitioners were a set of *poor ignorant creatures*, who knew nothing of what they were talking about; a set of the "*Lower Classes*," who ought never to raise their reading above that of childrens' books; Christmas Carols, and the like.

For my part, I have always held a mere knowledge of the rules of grammar very cheap. It is a study, which demands hardly any powers of mind. To possess a knowledge of those rules is a pitiful qualification. Twenty years ago, and more, I wrote a grammar, when in Philadelphia. It was, too, written in the *French Language*, because its object was to teach Frenchmen English. This work soon found its way to France; from France into other parts of Europe. And, it now is, and long has been, the only grammar of the sort held in esteem in any part of Europe or America. I have now before me a copy of this work, bought at New York, and printed at Paris this very year by SAINTIN, while another edition is, it appears, published there by somebody else. The publishers say, that every body allows,

that it is the best of all works of the kind; but, in looking over it, which I have never once done before for 19 years, I am ashamed to see how many parts of it might have been much better than they are.

Now, I never had any master to teach me either French or English. I never went to any school after I was a mere child; and, surely, I never had any *leisure* time in my life. If, therefore, our good friends, the "*Weaver Boys of Lancashire*," will follow my advice, they shall soon be as superior to "*the Order of the Pigtail*" in the knowledge of this petty science as they already are in all the really praise-worthy qualities of the mind. Grammar is to literary composition what a linch-pin is to a waggon. It is a poor pitiful thing in itself; it bears no part of the weight; communicates nothing to the force; adds not in the least to the celerity; but, still the waggon cannot very well and safely go on without it; she is constantly liable to reel and be compelled to stop, which, at the least, exposes the driver to be laughed at, and that, too, by those who are wholly unable to drive themselves.

Therefore, trifling, and even contemptible, as this branch of knowledge is *in itself*, it is of vast importance as to the means of giving to the great powers of the mind their proper effect; and, also as to the means of enabling the People to criticise the speeches

and the writings of the insolent Order of the Pigtail, not one out of one thousand of whom knows any thing worth speaking of even of this snivelling science. The grammarian from whom a man of genius learns his rules has little more claim to a share of such man's renown than has the goose, who yields the pens with which he writes: but, still the pens are necessary, and so is the grammar.

This is a matter of much greater importance than men generally imagine, and of much too great importance for the enemies of our freedom to have overlooked; and, if I were to fix upon the greatest cause of the people having been so long kept down, I should, next after the insidious and irreligious influence of base hypocrites pretending to religion, rank the infinite pains that have been taken to amuse the people with little childish tracts, and, at the same time to keep up a monopoly of the study of Grammar; though, one would think, that that should have stood at the head of the plan of all our zealous "*educators of the poor.*"

It has been regarded as a sort of crime for any man to pretend to be a scholar, who has not been at the *University*, or at some great *Grammar School*, which are all so many instruments, as I shall presently shew, in the hands of the thoroughmongers, who fill them with their own relations, creatures, and dependents, except in very, very few cases. To qua-

lify men to write correctly would be *dangerous to them*, unless they took care to *select* those men. This is one cause of the base prostitution which we see in writers in England, where they are the most corrupt and servile in the world. But, when the great body of the People once know, that it is much easier to learn all the rules of grammar than it is to learn how to cut out well a gown, a coat, or a shoe, they will, I am convinced, laugh to scorn the grave-looking gentry, to whose surprizing wigs, of all sorts and sizes, they have so long looked up with reverence and awe.

Before I proceed in the further developement of my plan, it will be proper, and very useful, to display *the mischiefs*, which have arisen from the means that have been used to *confine* the possession of this branch of knowledge to the Aristocracy and their supple dependents; or rather to those dependents; for, as to the Aristocracy themselves, there are many of them, who know nothing of the matter any more than do their footmen and grooms.

About eight years ago, I gave it as my opinion, that "the study of what are called the *learned languages* was, generally speaking, *worse than useless.*" Of course, I thought it *mischievous*. This opinion being promulgated through the Register, brought upon me a torrent of *abuse* such as I hardly ever experienced. The

"*learned*" wigs were all in agitation. Pig-tails, bob-tails, single tails and many tails, bushes, full-bottoms and bags, rose their fine, soft curls like hog's bristles in hostility against me. The *gowns* and *robes* shook a hurricane. And the *caps*, round, square and three-cornered, seemed to have turned themselves into stone to be hurled at my devoted head. I promised to answer all these attacks; but, the affair of the Duke of York and Mrs. Clark coming on soon afterwards, the thing went out of my head for a while, and so it became neglected; though, whenever I have thought of the matter, it has always appeared to me to be of the greatest importance; and, as the Boroughmongers and their underlings, by shutting me up in Newgate for two years, gave me leisure to expose the Funding System, in my work entitled "*Paper against Gold*;" so, by their passing of laws, putting my life in hourly danger, they have given me leisure to expose a part of their general system, still more mischievous than that of Funding, because its object and tendency is to keep the *minds* of the people in a state of darkness and subjection.

I propose to prove to you, Sir, *first*, that those languages, which are called "*learned languages*," are no more learned than any other languages; and that the very use of this appellation is a cheat; a trick, intended to im-

pose upon the mass of mankind, and to keep them in a state of unnecessary, and, therefore, unjust subjection. *Second*, that the study of them is generally speaking, of no real use. *Third*, that the general object and tendency of the teaching of them are *mischievous*. When I have thus traced Corruption back to her very egg, I shall proceed to develop to you the means of crushing, or of faddling that egg, in order that our children, at least, may be delivered from those numerous broods, which now, vulture-like, prey upon our very vitals. The place where a set of Monks lived, or where they still live, is called a *Convent* in English. This comes from the French word *Couvent*; and this comes from the French word *Couver*, which means *to sit over eggs*. The brood, which comes from a sitting is, in French, called a *couvée*; and, hence comes our word a *covey* of Partridges. The Monk's place was called *Couvent* in French and *Convent* in English, because they pretended, that they were *a brood of the choice children of God*, collected together in fulfilment of that passage of Scripture, which says, "Like as a *hen* gathereth her *chicken* under her wings, so will the Lord gather together his children under his wings." Pretty *chicken* they have been! From them, have gone forth a great part of the curses, which have afflicted the world. It was in the *Convents*, or sitting places,

that were *hatched* the Inquisition and all those means of robbing, tormenting, and brutalizing mankind, which have produced such dreadful misery. The French Revolutionists disturbed a great many of these hatching places. They put the chickens, that is to say, the gormandizing, drunken, debauched, and savage Monks to flight; sold the lands and houses which they had extorted, and exposed the whole thing to the hatred it so well merited. And, our *sweat* and *blood* have been expended in order to *restore*, as far as possible, this scandalous cheat; this gross insult and injustice towards the people of France, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands! Our Universities, Colleges, and Great Schools are of Monkish origin, and still retain, along with the dormitories and cloisters of the Monks, many of their rules and regulations, much of their profligacy, and all their greediness and all their cunning. In place of meriting the appellation grounded on the tender idea of a brood of innocent little creatures, collected under the wings of the fondest of mothers, the Convents of the Monks were Wasps' nests, whence the lazy and cruel inhabitants sallied forth to rob and sting, to annoy, persecute, and murder, the industrious, laborious and provident Bees. Whether the same appellation would suit their successors, you will be better able to judge before the close of this investigation.

To prove to you, that the calling of the *Latin* and *Greek* languages the "*learned languages*," is, at best, *foolish*, will require but very little of that time, of which both you and I have abundance upon our hands. What does the word *learned* mean? It means, in its epithet sense, *being possessed of knowledge*. To *learn* means to *acquire knowledge*. And *learning*, in its substantive sense, means *knowledge*. Thus you would say, "I have *learned* to make shoes"; as I used to say, "I have *learned* my manual exercise".

I pray you to bear in mind then, that *learning*, in its substantive sense, means *knowledge*, and that, in no case whatever, it has any other literal meaning. It is of importance to bear this in mind; because the whole cheat would soon melt away before it, even if we were to stop at this bare fact.

Now, what is *knowledge*? It comes from the word *to know*; and it simply means *to know how to do so and so, to know about so and so*. Thus, to know how to write, is to have a knowledge of the way to write. To know about the counties of England, is to have a knowledge of the counties of England. When we say, that a man is *learned* in the law; we mean that he has a great deal of *knowledge* as to the law. What *sense* is there, then, in calling a *lawyer* a "*learned gentleman*" any more than in calling a *chemist*, or *machine inventor*, a "*learned gentleman*"? I ask what *sense*

there is in it? Doubtless it requires great labour as well as great natural talent to acquire a thorough knowledge of the principles and well to understand the application of the law; but, does it require *less* of either to acquire a thorough knowledge of the properties of plants and minerals, or of the powers of water, fire, wheels and cogs, and of the powers of all their various combinations? Law, Physic, and Divinity are called the *learned professions*; but, I believe, that the scores of thousands who belong to them would never have found out the knowledge of making the Block-Cutting Machine at Portsmouth.

I allow, however, that the words *learning* and *learned* have been applied, and fairly, though figuratively, applied and appropriated to departments of knowledge of the *higher order*; for, it is certainly more honourable to the mind of man to invent a Block-machine than it is to invent a Mouse-trap. To know how to write is something above knowing how to drive plough. But, what has this to do with the *language*, in which the professor of learning, or knowledge, expresses himself? Why should one language be called *learned* any more than another? There is some ground for distinguishing certain professions in this way; but, what ground can there possibly be for calling *Latin* and *Greek* the *Learned Languages*; that is to say, the *Languages of Knowledge*? According to this, an Essay on digging may be very *learned*; while an essay on the subject of the grandest machines, on the most hidden secrets of nature, or even on law, physic, or divinity, may be *unlearned*. If, indeed, those two languages were

the *store-houses of knowledge*; if the books in those languages, contained facts and principles to guide us in religion, and in all the arts and sciences, there might be some colour for the application of this distinctive mark. But, this is not the case. The Testament is in Greek, and it is in other languages also. The religion of all the most admired Latin and Greek books is that of Heathens, or of Atheists; and yet these books, we are told, are absolutely necessary to teach men to be learned, and to be fit to teach us religion and to govern us! The authors of those books knew not much more about the Arts and Sciences than the Negroes of Africa know. They knew nothing about astronomy, navigation, very little about chemistry, and, if they had seen one of ARKWRIGHT'S machines, they would certainly have kneeled down before him, and worshipped him as a *God*. VIRGIL, the greatest of all the Latin Poets, the most praised and the most read, wrote on *Agriculture*, and our countryman, TULL, proved, a hundred years ago, that *all his principles were false*, from beginning to end. Yet, this is a subject, where *principles* cannot change with time or with climates. The same may be said of COLUMELLA, another writer on *Agriculture*. A farmer would have nothing to do but to follow their principles to become a beggar in a few years. VIRGIL was a gross flatterer of a tyrant, who had destroyed the liberties of his country, which tyrant he placed *amongst the Gods*; and, as to his *morality*, he gives *direct encouragement* to that crime, which we call *unnatural*, and which we justly *punish with death*. And these are the "*learned languages*,"

while the language of BACON and TEMPLE and SIDNEY and LOCKE and TULL and SYDENHAM and NEWTON and POPE and FRANKLIN is an *unlearned language*! And we are to acknowledge our inferiority to others, merely because those others have, for a number of years, lived in places where the language of VIRGIL is taught! The Boys at *Westminster School* act Greek Plays, which are full of *bawdy*, and the publication of any thing a fiftieth part so vile would cause any man in London to be imprisoned and to stand in the pillory, and very justly, too. Yet, many of these gentry are intended for our "*pastors and masters*," to whom we are to "*bow lowly and reverently*;" and, they are under the care of, and receive their teaching from, those who are actually our pastors already!

It is clear, therefore, that, so far, the study of these languages must be *useless*, at the least. But, it is allowed, that there are *some works* in those languages, which it may be useful to be able to *read*. And, what then? Have not every one of these books been translated into our own language long ago? And, there can be *no more books* in those languages, observe, the languages being now *dead*, as they are called; that is to say, they are neither written nor spoken by any people in the world. Whatever useful knowledge they are capable of conveying to us, we possessed long ago. The books have all been translated by the ablest professors of the languages. If those professors disagree, who is to decide between them? I remember a dispute I had with DR. PARR upon this subject about eight years ago. The only

possible good that he could assign to a knowledge of the dead languages was this: that a clergyman might refer *himself* to the *Greek*, or the *Hebrew*, or to those ancient writers who are called the *Fathers*, and who wrote in *Latin*. "Well, Doctor, and what is he to gain by that?"—"Why, he will be able to *compare* the original with the translation."—"And what of that? If he find the translation correct, he gains nothing. If he find it incorrect, will he dare to tell his congregation the result of his researches? And, besides, who will believe *him*, or who *ought* to believe him, in preference to those men, who were selected for the office of translators, and whose performances have received the sanction of so many ages? If it be so very difficult to come at the meaning of the books in question that it may be admitted that a body of the greatest professors may have erred, how can any man, without extreme presumption, pretend to suppose himself capable of arriving at the truth? Besides, as far as relates to the Scriptures, if he really detect any error of great importance, as the Unitarians say they have, the natural and unavoidable consequence is, that those whom he shall succeed in convincing, will believe, that there are *many* errors of importance; and, then, away goes the whole thing all at once. So that, unless *this result* be likely to be *useful*, of which you, Doctor, are a better judge than I, a knowledge of these languages appears to me wholly *useless*, at least, to any teacher of the Gospel, especially if he belong to a Church,

“ which has told him by act of Parliament what he shall teach, and, at his entrance into which, he has solemnly declared at the altar, that he believes in the Scriptures as translated.”—They called us to tea; and so ended the dispute. Whether this great professor was convinced, I know not; but he never renewed the contest, though it had been interrupted in the presence of one of his pupils.

But, *Lawyers?* There is a good deal of *Latin* in law. Yes, but there is much more of *French*. There are the names of writs and of processes in *Latin*. But, there are whole acts of Parliament in *French*. As to the *Latin* it is no more than the mere names of certain forms of proceeding; and all these are known to Attorneys’ Clerks full as well as to the Lord Chancellor, though the former understand no more about the *Latin* language than my dog does. In fact the Acts, which were passed in *French*, are all translated, and so stand in the Statute Book; and the writings of all the ancient Lawyers, such as FORTESCUE, have all been translated, and they are referred to in the translation and not in the original. In the translation they are *law authorities*. In the original they are not. But, if any, it is the *French*; the old black-guard, Norman *French*; this, if any, is the learned “*language of lawyers*.” However, it is all nonsense. Our ancestors, in reducing the power of the Norman race, drove out the language, which they had forced into the courts of law and justice. The mere dregs, or marks, of it remain; and that is all; and a lawyer need be what is called a *Latin* or a *French scholar* no more than he needs be a Chinese or a Hebrew or a Dutch scholar.

It is clear, that the languages, called the “*learned languages*,” are not more learned, but that they are less

so, than other languages; seeing that the writings in the former discover an ignorance, relative to many important things, with which mankind are now become well acquainted; and, I think, it is also clear, that the acquiring of a knowledge of them is, generally speaking, *useless*. It remains to be shown, then, that the teaching of them is *worse than useless*; or, in other words, *that it is mischievous*.

It is no small mischief to a boy, that many of the best years of his life should be devoted to the learning of what can never be of any real use to any human being. His mind is necessarily rendered frivolous and superficial by the long habit of attaching importance to words instead of things; to sound instead of sense. When you are told (a thing which you will hardly believe), that the boys at these *learned* schools are set to make what are called “*Nonsense Verses*” in *Latin*; that is to say, to place a parcel of *Latin* words in lines, so that each line shall contain a particular number of syllables, having the accent falling in a certain way, without any regard to the sense or meaning of the words: as, for example:—

Meadow when for surprize she backward
Cut finger tea-kettle coldest he again.

When you are told, that a considerable portion of a boy’s time is under a grave, wigged pedant; when you are told this, you, instead of wondering, that the colleges pour forth crowds of such fools as they notoriously do, will wonder that any thing but a fool should ever come forth from such places. Is it not fortunate if half a life restore the energies of mind thus enfeebled at the out-set? Must it not be a sort of miracle, if a bold thought, an original idea, ever come from such a mind? It has always been observed of these schools, that the most indolent and restive boys turn out to be the brightest men; and, in the instance of Dean Swift this indolence and restiveness were so remarkable, that he was actually expelled. The truth is, that, to a mind, strong by nature, this

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drudgery of nonsense is intolerable. Such a mind cannot submit to such degradation.

However, the general effect is, to accustom the mind, by slow degrees, to those trammels, in which, at last, it is not only content to remain, but for which it acquires a taste, at the same time, that it acquires a conceit, that superiority consists chiefly in the having been at a college. Hence this race of men are, at once, the most ignorant and the most conceited in the world; and, if they are of the *dependent* class, they have all the pride of the noble with far more than all the meanness of his meanest domestic servant. When you meet with one of them at a time, he wearies you half to death with his *puns*, his college jokes, and scraps; but, if *two*, they are a perfect pest. A loud tone and pulpit-like gesticulations they have learnt to great perfection, and ill-manners are the natural produce of their insolent conceit and fancied superiority. In a company, however numerous, they soon smell each other out. One or the other soon finds occasion, or makes occasion, to let it be known, that he has been at *Oxford* or *Cambridge*. The other, like gun-powder ready for the match, instantly catches, and off they both go inquiring of each other by turns after Jack such-an-one and Tom such-an-one; and then, to it they fall, reminding each other of all their college pranks; of all the drunken bouts, all the gettings out of windows; all their dances and dinners and suppers, not forgetting their duels and their amours. Now and then an empty woman, or her gaudy daughters, admire their trash; but, men of sense and of decent manners hear them with surprize and disgust.

If, however, the evil were confined to these gentry, it would not be great; but, it is far otherwise. The Aristocracy have a deep interest in the upholding of this *learned* system of cheat and oppression. There are valuable possessions of houses and lands belonging to the several great schools

and colleges. The produce of these falls to the *Teachers*, under one name or another. These teachers are, in fact, selected by the Aristocracy, who have the further power in their hands of bestowing Benefices, or Bishopricks, &c. upon the teachers; and, it is a like influence that selects the *scholars*, where they are to be educated *free of expence*. Here, then, at these places, slavery is taught systematically. The noblemen and gentlemen's sons are distinguished by a grander sort of *dress*. Here the needy learn in their youth to crawl to the rich and powerful. Here the poor expectant is early taught his dependence. Not like boys at a common school, where no one thinks about the *father* of another. Here the dependant begins to bespeak his pulpit, or his office under government, by creeping to the son of the Lord or the Baronet. The Teachers, who have the same game in eye, discover nothing but genius in the sons of the great, while they find to be dunces all who have no interest in Boroughs or in Livings. Here are both precept and example for all that is servile towards the powerful and for all that is insolent and cruel towards the weak. Here, in short, is every thing to render the great full of insolent pride, and the poor subservient and base. And these are the bodies, who have the peculiar privilege (confined to them and the City of London) of presenting petitions to the king on his throne!

From this chain of early dependence comes the prostitution of real talent, which we so often behold, and which is, at this moment, so remarkable in WILLIAM GIFFORD, who must despise the men he serves, but whose mind is fashioned to his slavery. The door of all the great schools, called *public schools*, and which, in fact, belong to the nation at large, is shut against every one, who cannot pay enormously, or who has not what is called *interest*. Thus a vote at an election is paid for by a stool at a

school or college: and I have actually known bargains of this sort driven. Mr. WAITHMAN laudably exposed the putting of a *Clergyman's* son into Christ-Church School, which was expressly endowed for the education of the sons of those who were *utterly unable* to cause their children to be educated. But, the like prevails every where; the door of all these seminaries are closed against independence of mind; and if, by any chance, it enter, it is a thousand to one if it ever return into the world.

The arts of *caressing* are by no means neglected, while those of humbling are going on. I have now before me an account of a *Frogmore Entertainment*, which I will quote, as a pretty complete instance of this sort. I find it in the MORNING CHRONICLE of the 19th of July last.

"On account of the unsettled state of the weather, and the appearance of more rain, it was determined to alter the arrangements made for the entertainment of the company by the Queen and Prince Regent dining in the Frogmore-house dining-room, where they were accompanied by about 60 particular friends; and during the time of their partaking of refreshments, the band of the first regiment of foot guards were stationed on the lawn near the window of the dining-room, where the Queen and Prince Regent were arranged, together with about sixty of their particular friends, consisting of the Cabinet Ministers, the Foreign Ambassadors and Ministers, with their Ladies, &c. The cards of invitation to the company was for two o'clock, at which hour the company began to arrive, and they continued setting down, amounting to upwards of 1000 persons, including the scholars of Eton School, to the number of near 500, who were principally dressed in blue coats, white waistcoats and trowsers, who began to play at cricket on the newly-purchased and attached grounds to Frogmore Gardens. They were accompanied by the Rev. Dr. Goodall, the Provost of Eton, and other heads of the establishment. The company invited began to arrive at the same time, and continued setting down till the whole had alighted from their carriages. On account of the unsettled state of the

weather, it was altered from the original arrangement of the Queen, &c. taking refreshment in what is called Tippoo Saib's tent, but which was converted into a kind of state drawing-room, it having undergone considerable improvements by Mr. Girtz, the upholsterer of Windsor; the English Royal Arms having been substituted in the centre of the back, with an exalted chair in imitation of a throne, with national ornaments, under which her Majesty received the company. After which she was drawn about the grounds in her garden chair, as were the Duchess of Gloucester, the Duchess of York, the Princesses, the Countess and Countess Dowager of Harcourt, the Countess of Pembroke, &c. &c. for whom chairs drawn by ponies were provided. The Prince Regent attended his Royal Mother a great part of the time in her chair, and at others he walked with the Countess Lieven, the Lady of the Russian Ambassador. The Queen appeared in excellent health, and highly delighted in the reception of her distinguished guests to the entertainment, for which no pains or expense had been spared, and every rarity was produced, consisting of every delicacy, all sorts of ices in the highest perfection; pines, grapes, &c. in great profusion. Every thing was conducted with the greatest regularity. The three military bands were stationed so as to form a triangle. No person was admitted into the tents till five o'clock, when a signal announced that all was in readiness, and the youths lost no time in leaving their game of cricket, to resort to the tent prepared for them, measuring about seventy yards in length, with two tables, to accommodate about 500; the cloth was laid for 480, and for the whole company for 1054. The youths drank the healths of the Queen, the Prince Regent, and with the most electric effect of three times three, in the most enthusiastic manner, which was heard for a very considerable distance from such a numerous body of voices."

Thus were these boys brought to this scene to gain them for ever to the cause of *legitimacy*. Only think of the effect of all this splendour, all this military display and music, joined with the kindness of the invitation and the honour of the distinction, upon the minds of 500 boys, into whose ears is daily dinned the duty of sub-

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mission to superiors! Not one out of the 500, who did not wish to be a courtier; and the Rev. Dr. GOODALL's precepts would have, I warrant them, no tendency to check the wish. Thus are these boys enlisted under the banners of court-sycophancy. Thus is their genius smothered. Thus are their minds prejudiced and destroyed. They went to play at *cricket*. The kind Queen had graciously prepared bats and balls for these *superiors* of the rising generation! They reckon without their host. They will not be the *superiors* of the rising generation. The contemptible, frivolous, lick-spittle animals will be pushed aside by Apprentices and Plough-boys.

One would think, that Corruption had done her utmost in the establishments and means above described. Having applied the colleges and schools, which are *public property*, to the exclusive benefit of the few. Having secured the appointment of all the Teachers and the selection of almost the whole of the Scholars, one would think, that she might repose in safety. But, she has not stopped here. She has seen, that, in spite of all this, *the People* produced more men of real learning and talent than she could muster. Therefore she has erected *bars* to keep them back in the several professions, called learned. The Physicians, in their *Royal College*, shut out all but those who come from some College, where Latin and Greek are taught. The Church admits none who have not been to College, and, to be a *Doctor*, the man must *preach a Latin Sermon*, which he often does without knowing what he preaches, the sermon having been written by some man in, perhaps, a garret in London. And, to get to the *Bar* you must have the *consent* of what is called *the Benchers*, who are generally fast in Corruption's interest, and who may refuse and set you aside by their absolute will, *without any reason assigned*. But, there is one regulation which is infamous, with regard to the

Bar. It is this. In order to be admitted to the Bar, to plead as a counsel, a man must previously have *kept his terms*, as it is called, at one of the Inns of the Courts, such as Gray's Inn, Lincoln's Inn, &c. for the space of five years; and *his name must be entered* in the Books of the Inn. He must conform to certain rules as to attendance in the Hall of the Inn, during the five years. So far all is very well; because it is proper, that gentlemen should become acquainted with one another in this way, previously to their being concerned together in important affairs. But, there is a *sum of money to be paid at the entrance*; and here is the infamy. This sum is *a hundred pounds*, if the intended student has *not been at the University*; but, if he has, it is *six or seven pounds*, or some such trifle! So, because it is to be presumed, that he is *rich*, or has been supported by the great and powerful, he is to pay hardly any thing; and, because of the contrary, he is to pay a serious sum of money! He is to be mulct and fined in order to check him in his pursuit of fame and of fortune. And this is done in that country, where the aristocracy are professing such an anxious desire to *educate the poor*! Thus, in some degree, are the lawyers selected by the Borough-mongers; and thus is one great means of protection taken from men's properties and lives. Need we wonder, that the Bar abounds with meanness and servility unparalleled? Need we wonder at instances, such as the history of the trials of Lord Cochrane will furnish? If we look into the history of all the Colleges and Free Schools, we shall find, that they were founded for the express purpose of *giving encouragement to the acquiring of Learning, or Knowledge*; and, they were to be open to *all the people*. Their charters say not a word about the encouragement of Boroughmongering, servility, corruption, bribery, and hostility to freedom; but, to these ends

have the greater part of these venerable establishments been perverted; and thus it is, that they have mainly assisted in producing, by slow degrees, that ruin and slavery, under which our country now groans, and of which *you* are experiencing the bitter consequences.

Now, Sir, in proceeding to proclaim open war against this system of "*learned*" fraud, I will first observe, that it is not to be *believed*, that the present state of things can *long* continue; and, I am quite sure, that a Reformed Parliament would soon convince the "*learned*" gentlemen, that a system of *exclusion* is, in fact, an unjust attack upon the people at large. But, let us suppose the *worst*; let us suppose, that this power of shutting out the people will remain for some years; then, the thing to be done is, to enable the young men of the present day, and those who shall be young men in *four* or *five* years time, *to write correctly*; and then they will become, in the course of a little time, a great deal more than a match for the whole mass of imposture. The *Soldiers* also will become possessed of this same capacity. The whole body of the people will be so completely capable of detecting and exposing the tricks and contrivances of their oppressors, that the power of doing mischief will die a natural death in the hands of those oppressors. Besides, let us make an effort to rise above them. They have treated us with affected scorn; they have endeavoured to tread us under foot. Let us put their insolent pretensions to the test.

A competent knowledge of *grammar* is, as I said before, *absolutely necessary* to enable men to *write correctly*, or to know when writing is correct. Is it not surprizing, then, that those kind and benevolent Societies of Aristocrats and Stock Jobbers, who are so zealously labouring for the *education* of the poor, should never have thought of this branch of literary learning,

which is the foundation of all the methodical part of that learning? No. It is not surprizing at all; for, if you examine the whole of their proceedings closely, you will find, that the *real* object of the *knowing ones* amongst them, is, not to *spread light*, but to *perpetuate darkness*. During the late public meetings for Reform, the People, as I have before frequently observed, frightened the Boroughmongers more by the talent, which they displayed, than by any thing else. They said, that the *character* of the People was *changed*; they *complained*, in substance, of the People having become *too well informed*; that they *read too much*. But, what they, in their reports, did in substance, the Lord of your dungeon, Sidmouth afterwards did *in plain words*. During the Debate on his famous *Circular*, on the 12th of May last, speaking of the *cheap publications*, he said (as the *Courier* reports):—

"He knew that efforts unparalleled had been made to carry into every village and cottage in the manufacturing districts the poison of these *seditious* and *blasphemous doctrines*. He had himself *seen the effects* of these pernicious doctrines on some of these *misguided men*; and had heard from some of them, *while under examination*, the free confession that it was the influence of this poison that had taken them away from their regular duties: that up to the time of their being *assailed* with those publications, they had been industrious and well-affected members of society; but that themselves, and hundreds of their *unfortunate neighbours* had been *corrupted by the insidious principles disseminated by these itinerant hawkers of sedition and blasphemy*. Never was there a period till the present when blasphemy was so completely enlisted in the service of sedition. A greater number of persons could read now, than at any former period: they were better informed: they were collected more in

"large bodies, especially in manufacturing towns; there was also, he was sorry to say, more alehouses. Besides, these publications were very cheap, almost gratuitous; and the seditious and blasphemous dealers were itinerant, in order to disseminate their mischievous wares more widely."

Now, as to the words *seditious* and *blasphemous*, that they were unjustly used is clearly proved, because the authors and venders of seditious or blasphemous writings are *punishable by due course of law*; and, no one has been punished for either. And, as to the *confessions* of some of those persons, who were so very free, while standing before him, under his warrants, I believe not one word of the matter; nor do I think, that one single man in the whole nation believes a word of it. But, here we have the plain *confession from him*, that the people are **BETTER INFORMED than at any former period!** Sad acknowledgment from him who complains that they have acquired a greater relish for what he *calls* sedition and blasphemy! This is conclusive against him. He has here choaked himself with his own venom. "The People read more now than at any former period." Well? And what then? What are all your Bell's and Lancaster's and God knows how many other sorts of Sunday and Week-day and Night Schools for? What are they for, man? Are they intended to prevent the people from reading? If they be, what a gang of profound hypocrites must the patrons of those schools be! But, these publications are so cheap. Cheap, and are not the Tract gentry's publications cheap? Are they not sold for a half-penny? Are they not given away? And do not the sons and daughters of the Pension and Sinecure Lists subscribe most generously their pennies in the pound to send forth works inculcating the doctrines of *legitimacy* and of *passive obedience*; and did not this Sidmouth himself, in his official capacity, give

his sanction to the establishment, at Norwich, of a society for distributing publications of this very sort? *Cheap*, indeed! Why, what has all this school-subscribing been for? What a complaint is here bolted out, at last, from the lips of one of the great patrons of the education of the poor! One of these philanthropic souls here *bewails*, that the People get *Cheap* publications, that they *read more than ever*, and that they are *better informed* than at any former period! This is with him a subject of *sorrow*! It shall be one of the great objects of my life to add most hugely to the cause of that sorrow!

But, if our publications are *cheap*; so are those of Corruption. The truth is, however, and that she knows, that the People will not read her publications, though almost crammed down their throats. The women now know the real object of her affected kindness; and the children suck in with their mother's milk a contempt for her hypocritical caresses. They look upon her *Tracts* as the beggar in the fable looked upon the Priest's *blessing*. "Pray give me a shilling," said the beggar, "for I am cold and hungry, and have no where to lay my head."—"I give you a shilling," said the Priest, in a true Priest-like voice, "get from my door!"—"Bestow, then, a penny upon a poor perishing creature."—"No: get from my door, I say!"—"Nay, even a farthing might save my life for an hour, for I feel death creeping over me."—"Not a farthing shall you have from me," said the Priest, "so, begone, or I'll set my dogs upon you."—"Well, then," said the unfortunate wretch, as death is my doom, I beseech you, Reverend Father, to bestow on me your blessing."—"Aye, my son," said the Priest, "kneel down, and receive it with devotion and gratitude."—"No," said the beggar, "you may keep your blessing to yourself; for, I have proof, that

"if it were worth one single farthing, 'you would not give it me.' This is precisely the light, in which the people view the cheap and give-away pamphlets of the sons and daughters of Corruption. The blessing of the Priest (a *Popish* one, mind; for I should not speak thus of the blessing of one of our Most Reverend, Right Reverend, Very Reverend, or Reverend Gentlemen); the blessing of the Priest was an *imposture*. Its intention was to perpetuate darkness, to uphold fraud and oppression; and to the pamphlets of the sons and daughters of Corruption, the people ascribe the same motives, and they treat those pamphlets accordingly.

This is the place, in which Corruption is most tender; for, she knows, that, in the end, *light* must destroy her, as sure as the sun destroys the moth and the bat. In darkness only can she reign or live. Every ray of light alarms her, and that general blaze of knowledge, which has burst forth upon our country, and which would gladden the heart of a righteous government, has driven her to deeds characteristic of the last stages of madness. Her *tricks* have all been tried, and they have failed. She

has now resorted to outrageous violence. I think she will destroy herself in a short time; but, as I said before, let us prepare for a *long war* against her. If she out-live us, let us arm our children for the contest; let us give them those most powerful and most durable of all arms, the arms of the *mind*.

To develope the means, that I intend to use in the discharge of my part of this sacred duty, will require more space than I have now left. This, therefore, I will do in another Letter; and, in the meanwhile, I beg you to be assured, that, though in one of SIDMOUTH'S dark dungeons, I look upon you as a better informed man, and a man much more worthy of respect, than any one of the far greater part of those, who have assented, either expressly or tacitly, to those acts, in consequence of which you have been imprisoned. With anxious and confident hopes, that you will live to see the light, to see the liberties of England restored, and to obtain complete justice for your wrongs, I remain

Your sincere friend,
and most obedient servant,
WM. COBBETT.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

Printed and Published by WM. JACKSON, No. 11, Newcastle Street, Strand, and sold wholesale and retail, at 192, Strand, London.